

And it provides \$10 million to create a new EPA grant program to help States, Tribes, local governments, and others prepare for and protect against the hazards of wildfire smoke.

In recent years, whether it is the impact of air quality on those with breathing and health issues or the tourism industry or industries like our wineries and our vineyards, the smoke that can blanket Oregon from fires during fire season has been nearly as devastating as the fires themselves.

Our subcommittee has also crafted a bill that takes on the climate crisis with the seriousness it deserves while we are striving to preserve our lands and our natural wonders. There is no question the planet is getting warmer. Our oceans are getting more acidic as carbon dioxide is transformed into carbonic acid. That is having a big impact on our ecosystems on the Oregon coast. We are facing more extreme weather—droughts, storms, flooding, heat waves—but for too long, we haven't come anywhere close to doing enough to confront this crisis.

We are starting to make changes through the Interior appropriations bill. The bill makes major investments in EPA's climate and enforcement programs, including a 46-percent increase in the clean air and climate program to tackle the crisis, restore clean air capacity, and expand and modernize air quality monitoring. And it provides an extra \$56 million for the Agency's enforcement and compliance efforts and over \$40 million for the Climate Conservation Corps that will create jobs while jump-starting efforts to dramatically expand on-the-ground conservation work to address the impacts of climate change; conserve and restore public lands and public waters; bolster resilience, increase reforestation, protect biodiversity, and improve access to recreation.

There is also \$73 million in new funding to start the process of transitioning the Interior Department from fossil fuel vehicles to zero-emission vehicles. It is something that has to happen across our entire government.

Finally, we have worked together to craft a bill that makes unprecedented, long overdue investments in Tribal communities, in their health systems, their education systems, social services, water resources and infrastructure, and in law enforcement. For far too long, our Tribal communities haven't received the help or the investments that they deserve. In this bill, we are starting to right that wrong.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is getting a 15-percent increase in funding. The Indian Health Service is getting a 21-percent increase in funding. And for the first time, the Indian Health Service is getting an advance appropriations status. What that means is if the government shuts down, we don't shut down the health services for Native Americans. When that happened in the past, that was an egregious failure.

You can't let that happen. This bill puts an end to that, creating peace of mind for everyone that the health service will be there when needed.

We are increasing the Bureau of Indian Education budget by 8 percent, the Native American and Alaska Natives housing programs by 18 percent. We certainly can't make up for centuries' worth of disastrous policy and chronic underfunding when it comes to Indian Country overnight, but I believe this bill and its unprecedented investments should begin to make a large stride toward fulfilling the government's treaty and trust responsibilities, showing Tribal communities that their needs are a priority.

There is a lot more in this bill. The Interior appropriations bill covers a lot of territory. But I wanted to come to the floor to share some of these highlights.

It is important that we get our funding bills for fiscal year 2022 to this floor, to the President's desk, and take all the expertise that has gone into these bills into action by bills that have passed and been implemented.

I want to provide a sense for all my colleagues that the real investments that these bills are making in our Nation are the kind of investments we need to make to ensure strong foundations for families, for our communities, and for our Nation to thrive in the years ahead.

I am grateful for the countless hours of hard work from the Members and, very importantly, from the staff who put these bills together, raising the salient issues, helping to communicate between the Republican side and the Democratic side and the House side and the Senate side and the expertise from the executive branch. The staff work that goes into a bill like this is enormous. So thank you to the staff teams on both the majority and minority side, without whom this bill would not exist.

On my team, we have Melissa Zimmerman, Ryan Hunt, Anthony Sedillo, and Martha Roberts. And on Ranking Member MURKOWSKI's team, we have Emy Lesofski, Nona McCoy, and Lucas Agnew. To each and every one of them, thank you for your tireless efforts. And I must say that the Republican and Democratic team members worked so well together on complex and difficult issues involved in the Interior bill. So I salute them for forging that effort to have a very professional analysis and attitude as we work to solve the challenges facing America.

I look forward to joining with all my colleagues in the Chamber in passing this bill and the other appropriations bills that will put America on a path to a much better future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today to take a step back really and evaluate the real-life impacts of President Biden's policies. As every in-

coming administration does, promises were made to the American people. That is not surprising. But one of President Biden's first promises was to unite the American people. But as we have seen too often here, he has chosen a path that follows the lead of the Democratic leadership of the House and Senate, which is really a solitary path instead of a path of unity.

So it is fair to ask: Has that agenda resulted in a better life for working families? Has it made us more prosperous, more secure? Has it made us safer?

Well, let's take a look. We can start with what is top of mind for all of our folks across the country, and that is the rising price of everyday goods and services. Every day, men and women go to work, take the kids to school, expecting the predictability that filling up their car will cost a certain amount or that trip to the grocery store will be in the same range. And what do they find? Well, thanks to inflation, fueled in part by excessive government spending to the tune of trillions of dollars—and I am afraid we haven't seen the end of it—Americans are paying higher prices for many of the things they just can't do without. Over the past year, consumer prices have risen 5.4 percent, the largest 1-year jump in 13 years.

So if you are saving up to buy a new or used car or truck, keep saving because it costs more under President Biden. Headed out to the grocery store? Prepare to see larger numbers at the bottom of your receipt, thanks to President Biden. Making monthly rent payments? If it seems higher than last year, that is because it is. The national median rent went up 17 percent since President Biden took office. Well, those numbers don't lie. People see them every day and they are in their bank accounts and in their checkbooks and in the strain of trying to make those things work. These are the real-life consequences of misguided economic policies from the left. Unfortunately, for working-class Americans, it means the only thing we have built back better is the return to soaring inflation and economic misery that many of us remember from the Jimmy Carter years.

Those years also remind us of another problem facing every family, as I mentioned before. That is the rising cost of gas. Digits on the gas pump—they tick up faster and faster every time you fill up, and it isn't because our tanks have gotten bigger, that is for sure. In West Virginia, the average cost of gas compared to this time last year is more than \$1 per gallon. So not only are those trips to the grocery store more expensive, it costs more to get to the grocery store. The White House has insisted that they are working on it, and on behalf of everyone in my State who drives to work, drops their kids off at school, and hops in the car to visit their families, I sure hope they are.

At the same time, it is important to note that on President Biden's first

day of office, he told us all we needed to know about his energy policy and that would be: America last. One of his first acts as President was to cancel the Keystone XL Pipeline, costing thousands of American jobs—union jobs—claiming that it had to be done to combat climate change. Compare that to just a few months later, when President Biden lifted sanctions—yes, he lifted the sanctions—on a Russian gas pipeline, allowing the Nord Stream II project to continue, further empowering Vladimir Putin and threatening the national security of America and our allies in Europe.

These are just a few of the backward moves by this White House that have left us really scratching our heads. And it has only been compounded by Executive action and regulations aimed at stifling the production of energy here in this country. We remember the effects—I certainly do in West Virginia—the effects of this playbook as it originally was created during the Obama years. So it is just a shame that this administration doesn't remember that.

Again, all of this is hitting the consumer—American consumer—hard right as we are approaching our winter months. It is expected that households will see their home heating bills rise 54 percent compared to last winter. And for homes that use natural gas for heat, which I do in my home and I would highly recommend it, they will pay about 30 percent more than they did last year. Families are having to cut back basic necessities just to heat their homes and make ends meet.

Another pledge President Biden made was to build a fair and humane immigration system. He gutted many of the deterrent policies that effectively kept illegal immigration numbers down, such as eliminating the effective “Remain in Mexico” policy; stopping construction of the border wall; and signaling to the whole hemisphere that if you make it to the U.S.-Mexican border, you will be allowed in.

This was reported today, and this has resulted in the highest numbers for a fiscal year that have ever been recorded of border arrests—1.7 million border arrests—the most ever on record. And again, these policies were all done in the name of creating a moral and humane system.

Well, let me tell you, the Senator from Missouri and I took a visit to the border just over the last year, and there was nothing humane about the conditions we saw with overcrowded migrant children facilities in Texas. There was nothing humane about the Haitian immigrants living under a bridge in Del Rio. There is nothing humane about women giving birth, and I believe at last count it was 11 children were born in those conditions. This all happened because they made that dangerous journey to the border believing that if they made it, they would be welcomed in. Well, guess what. They were right because about 12,000 of the Haitian refugees that were under that bridge are in this country right now.

I will take it a step further. There is nothing humane about fueling the disease of addiction millions of Americans battle as deadly drugs flow across our porous border and make their way into our communities. Not addressing an overdose crisis that took 93,000 sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers last year is not humane. You would say: How is this happening? The Border Patrol has got to focus on the human element while more and more drugs can pass through.

As someone representing a State hit hardest by the drug epidemic, I am pleading with President Biden and Vice President HARRIS or whoever is in charge of resolving the self-created border crisis to please do something different—or at least do something.

So this is what the first year of Biden's America looks like: failed policies, broken promises. Americans were promised prosperity, and we have gotten a sampling of socialism. We were promised a secure nation; instead, our borders are open and a humanitarian crisis rages on our southern border. We were promised a repaired reputation on the world stage, and instead we have led from behind and abandoned our own people abroad in Afghanistan. We were promised unity, and instead we heard divisive rhetoric that demonizes half of our country.

The better version of America President Biden was selling, as some of us had feared, was just too good to be true.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, Madam President, in just a few short months this year, we have seen a long list of problems develop in the country. Some of them my good friend the Senator from West Virginia just talked about. They range from inflation and debt to the hiring crisis, major disruptions in the supply chain.

When I was home in Missouri last week meeting with all kinds of employers and all kinds of businesses, big and small, everybody said: We can't find workers; we can't get the supplies we need; and we can't keep up with inflation.

What is astonishing to me is the Democrats continue to move forward with their \$3.5 trillion reckless tax-and-spending spree. And, you know, it is easy to take that number and just reduce the length of time you are going to try out all these new policies, and we are going to have to talk about that because that is going to be a big mistake.

In fact, the \$3.5 trillion reckless tax-and-spending spree, I think, easily—if you extend all of the policies through the whole 10 years—becomes a \$5 trillion reckless tax-and-spending spree. If you reduce the policies, it is pretty easy to get it to \$2 trillion.

But if you reduce the policies by just saying, “Instead of 10 years, we are going to have this policy for 3 years;

instead of 5 years, we are going to have this policy for 1 year.” all you have done is put future Congresses in a place where, frankly, Democrats would hope they can't say no.

After a year of the program, they can't say no to the second year of the program; or after 3 years of the program, they can't say no. I wouldn't take a whole lot of solace in the idea that we are going to reduce the number unless we look at the policies behind the number.

Now, some of my colleagues and some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle—the side of the aisle that the Presiding Officer will be sitting on now, the majority side of the aisle—have jumped headlong into this for the most part, but some of our colleagues have really raised some important questions.

For instance, one Senator said recently that expanding social programs while ignoring the millions of open jobs—this is that Senator's quote—“will only feed a dysfunction that could weaken our economic recovery.”

And, of course, that is exactly right. Businesses across the country are trying to hire workers for the more than 10 million job openings. Half the small businesses say they have jobs that they are struggling to fill—one-half of all small businesses.

I was in Farmington, MO, one day last week, and somebody at that roundtable said: I used to say we need to do whatever it takes to get skilled labor, and then occasionally I would say we need to do whatever it takes to get part-time labor. Now I am saying we need to do whatever it takes to get labor.

Because they can't fill the jobs they have.

What I was hearing all over our State, and I think every Senator in this body is hearing the same thing, which is that people can't find the people they need to do the work. Part of the reason that there are empty store shelves is you can't get people to keep those store shelves stocked, but part of the reason is that they can't get things to the stores to put on the shelves.

Everything from shipyards to trucking routes, to supply chains aren't working the way they should right now, and, largely, it is because they don't have the help they need to have.

Now, I am all for looking at our long-term supply chain needs, bringing things closer to our shores when we can do that, but that is not the problem right now. The problem right now is we can't get the things that come to our country to the places that they need to go, nor the things that are made in our country to the places they need to go.

Businesses are trying to keep up with worker demand, but worker shortage is making that impossible. Expanding and creating government pay—government handouts, I think, was what one of our colleagues on the Democratic side had referred to them as—if they are not connected to need or to work

doesn't make sense. We all want to help people who are in need, but we all want to do that in a rational way.

Another Democratic Senator pointed out the danger of all this extra government spending the President wants is going to really drive up inflation. And that is also correct. You can't put hundreds of billions of dollars into the economy and not have that drive up inflation.

If people have money that they wouldn't have otherwise, particularly money we had to borrow to get there or money we had to take out of the functioning economy to get there, that money gets spent, but not in the way that you would want it to be spent to grow an economy and do the best things for individuals and families.

The big spending spree really began in March with a partisan—a totally partisan, one-side-of-the-aisle only—\$2 trillion so-called COVID-19 relief law.

But, frankly, it was a recovery plan when a recovery was well underway. I think the recovery plan slowed down the recovery and made it less likely that people would get back to work. It made it more likely that people would have money to spend that they wouldn't have otherwise and drive inflation.

The expert opinion of economists on both sides of the aisle, who said that what was done in March of this year would assure inflation would rise, it is exactly the same thing they are saying about the bill that is being debated right now. It has already happened, and it is happening. Americans are paying more for everything from groceries to gasoline, to a big purchases, like a new car, or even a used car is selling at a new sudden premium.

Consumer prices have jumped 5.4 percent from 1 year ago. That is not the kind of thing that does anything to help families. In fact, according to Moody's Analytics, a family earning an average income of about \$70,000 is spending an extra \$175 a month on food, fuel, and housing because of what that article referred to as President Biden's inflation.

The White House Chief of Staff the other day, when I asked about inflation, said: Well, inflation was really a "high class problem."

I am not exactly sure what a high class problem means. If it means it is a big problem, that is right. If it means as I think it means, it is a problem that only wealthy Americans have to deal with, that couldn't be right. It is not an upper-class problem or a high-income problem. It is a problem that hits low-income households the hardest.

In the University of Michigan's latest survey of consumers said that only 70 percent of the people in that survey—that consumer survey, only 30 percent of people expect to be financially better off next year than they are right now. Seventy percent thought they would either be worse off or not make any gains at all.

That is not what we were seeing in 2018 and 2019 under the other tax policies where, for the first time in a couple of decades, the distribution of new income was strong at the lowest levels of working families.

The Democratic response is: Let's raise taxes. Let's spend trillions of dollars. Let's pile up more debt.

Or that one theory: No, it won't cost anything because we are paying for it.

Well, obviously, if you are paying for it, it had to cost something.

And how are you paying for it?

You are paying for it by taking things out of the economy in one hand and shoving them back into the economy with another.

At one point, one of our friends on the other side of the aisle expressed his opinion, as he put it, that "any expansion of social programs must be targeted to those in need and not expanded beyond what is fiscally possible."

That is, of course, the right position. All of us want to help people in need, but we don't want to expand that group beyond what you can fiscally deal with and not harm their own opportunities in the economy.

This reckless tax-and-spending spree includes a number of ways on how to expand social welfare programs and to cover people with high incomes. They are trying to create permanent, expanded subsidies for ObamaCare insurance plans. Now, we clearly have subsidies. They are clearly permanent. They are clearly substantial. But the bill wants to not only make the subsidies higher, but it wants them to be higher for more people who have higher incomes to start with.

They are also talking about tuition-free community college. Well, there is almost no community college in America today that is not already tuition-free for those people who we have decided are in the greatest need. That is what Pell grants are all about.

There is no community college in Missouri, and few community colleges anywhere in the country, where the full Pell grant doesn't pay all tuition, all books, and all fees with a little money left over to travel back and forth to the campus.

I am a big supporter of Pell grants. I worked a few years ago to go back to where we have year-round Pell grants. So if you are going to school and something is working for you, you can stay in school. You don't have to take a summer off and get a different job and then think you are coming back in the fall to find out that that just didn't work out.

We have solved this problem. If we haven't solved it adequately, well, let's increase the Pell grant amount. And if that doesn't do the job, why don't we increase the amount of family income you can have and still qualify for the maximum Pell grant or some other portion of the Pell grant?

There is an obvious solution here. As a matter of fact, in the markup of the

Labor-HHS bill, I think we added \$400 to the annual Pell grant this year, which is a pretty substantial increase in that grant. The government already spends more than \$28 billion every year for Pell grants.

If you really want to make higher education expensive, make it free. Go to every higher education institution in America, starting with community colleges, and say: We are going to make this free.

I was a university president for 4 years, and we have all seen what happens as we increased the government support for higher education.

I was the first person in my family to graduate from college. I am a big advocate for higher education, but everybody needs to have a stake in the game. You value what you pay for. You value what you have a commitment to. Free usually doesn't get you where you want to get. We don't want to duplicate what we are already doing, and we don't want to create free programs for people who don't need free programs.

Finally, obviously, a lot of emphasis and unease on these tax increases. One of my colleagues on the other side said our Tax Code "should not weaken our global competitiveness or the ability of millions of small businesses to compete."

That is undeniably true.

The 2017 Republican-led tax law followed a consensus that we need to bring the U.S. in line with our global competitors. Let's not get out of line and make it harder for us to compete. We were on an incredible trajectory of job creation and pay for all of the working-class families that had been left out of the system for too long. We could easily wipe out those gains with a corporate tax rate increase that loses our competitive advantage to people who we don't want to lose it to.

Democrats are also aiming several of their tax hikes at small businesses and family farms. They plan to hike, we hear, those taxes by 57 percent of the top marginal rate, from 29.6 to 46.4. There are a lot of concerns with the legislation that President Biden and his allies in Congress are trying to push through.

The American economy is struggling against the headwinds of an, frankly, administration that has done so much to create on its own. This terrible legislation would just make everything worse. Let's not work on one side only to make everything worse. Let's see what we can do to work together to make everything better.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I so appreciate the remarks of my colleague from Missouri, and it sounds as if he is hearing from his constituents in Missouri the same thing that I am hearing in Tennessee.

As a matter of fact, I held a telephone townhall last night. Thirty thousand of our citizens from Upper

East Tennessee were on this call, and to say that they are unhappy would be to put it mildly. That really is an understatement. They are angry. They are frustrated. They are exhausted with what this administration is doing. They are angry with how the Federal Government is responding to a host of issues.

They really took President Biden at his word for his Build Back Better. They expected that. But that is not what they have gotten. He has made a mess of it, and, indeed, what you have is a "Build Back Broke" agenda.

And my colleague from Missouri really laid that out. It is "Build Back Broke." That is what they are bringing forward. And that agenda of President Biden's and the Democratic Party has really destroyed a lot of the hopes and the dreams and some of the renewed prosperity of Tennesseans whose job isn't to study the economy but to move it forward.

They do the heavy lift every single day.

Last night, I spoke with businessowners who feel like they are under attack by this administration and their economic policy. The cost of doing business is going up. They are bleeding customers because they have less disposable income because of inflation, because of the price at the pump.

Supply chains are collapsing around them. It is difficult to get raw materials, like lumber and steel. They have no confidence at all in the administration's willingness or ability to solve this problem. They feel as if the administration does not give the ripping flip about what happens to them in Upper East Tennessee. This administration has forgotten them.

On top of everything else, these vaccine mandates—now, we are hearing a lot about that, and we are hearing from people who know they are going to lose their job. Many times, these are women who are the sole source—the sole source—of income for their families. These families are very concerned about how they are going to handle inflation, collapsing supply lines, how they are going to handle some of the broken social policies that this administration and their allies are trying to sneak into law.

So far this year, we have seen our colleagues across the aisle and down at the White House try to force through provisions of the Green New Deal that would bankrupt your average family and destroy economic development opportunities in rural areas.

We know that it is expected that the cost to heat your home this winter is going to increase 30 percent. Now, how do you handle that when you have lost your job? Do you just sit there and freeze? And you are losing your job because of a Federal mandate that says you have to go get a shot in order to keep a job that you love, in order to put food on the table to feed your family. This makes no sense.

I also heard from parents very upset about critical race theory and the way

this administration is trying to hijack education and force this curriculum, force cradle-to-grave socialism—daylight to dark, 24/7, depend on the Federal Government.

One of the things that frightens Tennesseans the most and came up regularly on our telephone townhall was the broken border policies. I have said it before; I will say it again. This fear has nothing to do with racism and xenophobia. This administration and my colleagues across the aisle need to get that point through their heads.

Tennesseans are afraid because they look at the border. What they are seeing is vulnerability. They see the drugs coming across that border because the drugs end up in their streets: fentanyl, meth, heroin.

Every town is a border town. Every State is a border State because Joe Biden's border policy is: Open up the border. Hang out the "Y'all come sign," and give everybody a plane ticket to wherever they are going in the country. And, oh, by the way, if the commercial flights are full, don't worry about it. We will go charter you a jet and send you under the cloak of darkness into Chattanooga or into Knoxville or into West Chester County. That is what concerns Tennesseans.

They are seeing what is happening with sex trafficking, with human trafficking. They are afraid of what cartels are doing because the cartels are saying: Thank you, Joe Biden. The door is open. We were not fearful. We are setting up distribution centers on U.S. soils.

That is right, the cartels, setting up their distribution centers. Why? Because Joe Biden is weak and feckless and doesn't stand up to protect the southern border.

There is another thing that they were quite exercised about last night, and it is the issue of election integrity. Indeed, I had a Tennessean call me at 6:45 this morning, and he said: Marsha, you have got to be kidding me. You mean they want to pass a bill that says anybody can go vote, that you can go vote the day of the election, that you don't have to show an ID to vote?

He said: You know, I recently had to show not only a vaccine card but my ID to prove that was my vaccine card to go sit inside at the In-N-Out Burger.

This is why people are so frustrated with Joe Biden. This is why they are so frustrated with the Democrats.

What are they looking for? They are looking for legislators to have some backbone, to stand up and stand for freedom, not to kowtow to a socialist agenda, because they know if the Democratic leadership and Joe Biden had their way with one vote, they would take one vote, and they would push to a socialist agenda.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Minnesota.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwith-

standing rule XXII, at 10:30 a.m., on Thursday, October 21, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Lin, Parker, and Perez nominations, in that order; and that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, all postcloture time will be considered expired at 1:45 p.m.; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Lin nomination, the confirmation vote occur at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday; finally, that if cloture is invoked on either the Parker or Perez nominations, the confirmation votes begin at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, October 25.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Middlebury College, in my State of Vermont, is known worldwide as an outstanding educational institution. What is less well-known is that the college is also a leader in addressing climate change.

The college first became carbon neutral not by simply purchasing carbon credits, but by doing the hard work of actually becoming carbon neutral, including the implementation of 123 individual efficiency projects that are collectively saving the college nearly \$1 million a year. With that work complete, they set about securing their energy entirely from renewable sources—first, with one of the largest biodigesters in Vermont and, now, with a 5 megawatt solar array, that will provide 30 percent of the college's electricity.

The project includes energy storage, which will benefit the electric grid by spreading out when the power enters the grid. Perhaps more importantly, that stored energy will also serve as a source of emergency power for a nearby hospital, Porter Medical Center. The project also involves two Vermont companies: Encore Renewable and Green Mountain Power.

Earlier this month, it was an honor to join the groundbreaking for the project, where Middlebury College President Laurie Patton shared her vision for how to get to a better climate future. All should read her impressive remarks at the event, and I ask that a copy of them be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: